DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 414 968 JC 980 040

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TITLE	Term-to-Term Retention. Prince George's Community College Office of Institutional Research and Analysis. Enrollment Analysis.
INSTITUTION	Prince George's Community Coll., Largo, MD. Office of Institutional Research and Analysis.
REPORT NO	EA97-7
PUB DATE	1997-06-00
NOTE	9p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Evaluative (142)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Academic Persistence; Cohort Analysis; *College Outcomes Assessment; Community Colleges; *Enrollment Trends; Longitudinal Studies; *School Holding Power; *Stopouts; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS	Prince Georges Community College MD

ABSTRACT

A study was undertaken at Maryland's Prince George's Community College to determine term-to-term retention rates for the four cohorts of first-time freshmen entering in fall 1990 (n=2,643), fall 1991 (n=2,251), fall 1992 (n=2,563), and fall 1993 (n=2,419). Two measures of retention were determined: the percentage of students who enrolled the subsequent semester and the percentage of students who returned for at least one term by fall 1996. Study findings included the following: (1) for the fall 1990 cohort, 61% also enrolled in spring 1991, while 73% enrolled in at least one later term; (2) 44% of the fall 1990 cohort also enrolled in fall 1991; (3) term-to-term retention rates for the remaining cohorts were 60% for the fall 1991 cohort, 58% for the fall 1992 cohort, and 60% for the fall 1993 cohort; (4) the percentage of students who attended at least one later term by fall 1996 was 70% each for the fall 1991, fall 1992, and fall 1993 cohorts; and (5) in general, less than half of the students starting in the fall return for the following fall and less than a third persist beyond three years. (BCY)

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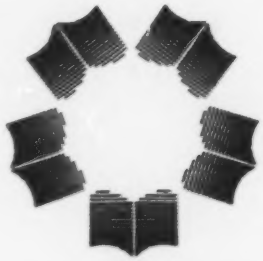
Term-to-term Retention



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Enrollment Analysis EA97-7

June 1997

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PRINCE GEORGE'S COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Office of Institutional Research and Analysis

TERM-TO-TERM RETENTION

Enrollment Analysis EA97-7
June 1997

Introduction

Term-to-term retention was designated by the Campus Retention Committee as one of three measures of student persistence to be tracked to monitor the effectiveness of intervention strategies (*Campus Retention Committee Progress Report*, March 1996). This enrollment analysis presents the latest information on term-to-term retention at Prince George's Community College.

Methodology

Retention rates were calculated for four cohorts of first-time college students entering Prince George's Community College in recent fall semesters. These first-time fall entering cohorts form the core of the college's longitudinal student tracking system. The data and rates presented here include all students in each cohort, unlike the office's student degree-progress and achievement studies which typically exclude non-degree-seeking students.

For each cohort, retention was defined in two ways. First, the number and percent of students enrolled each term were determined. For example, of the 2,643 first-time students entering PGCC in fall 1990, a total of 1,614 or 61 percent enrolled in spring 1991. To account for interrupted studies ("stop-out" behavior), a second set of retention rates was calculated. The number and percent of students enrolled in a specified *or subsequent* semester were determined. Thus, for the same fall 1990 cohort, as of fall 1996 a total of 1,941 students (or 73 percent) enrolled in spring 1991 *and/or a later term*. The difference of 327 students (1,941 minus 1,614) represents fall 1990 entrants who did not enroll in spring 1991 but who attended PGCC in at least one later term. Unlike the rates calculated under the first definition, term retention rates which include enrollment in subsequent terms may change as the analysis is extended to include additional semesters.

Retention and Persistence of the Fall 1990 First-time Cohort

The number and percent of fall 1990 first-time students retained, according to both definitions, are reported in the table on page two.

Fall 1990 First-time Students, Term-to-Term Retention				
	Students Attending Specified Term		Students Attending Specified or Subsequent Term	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Fall 1990	2,643	100%	2,643	100%
Spring 1991	1,614	61%	1,941	73%
Summer I 1991	267	10%	1,598	60%
Summer II 1991	160	6%	1,578	60%
Fall 1991	1,175	44%	1,566	59%
Spring 1992	968	37%	1,386	52%
Summer I 1992	187	7%	1,163	44%
Summer II 1992	115	4%	1,143	43%
Fall 1992	727	28%	1,129	43%
Spring 1993	595	23%	992	38%
Summer I 1993	125	5%	827	31%
Summer II 1993	92	3%	814	31%
Fall 1993	462	17%	790	30%
Spring 1994	344	13%	678	26%
Summer I 1994	84	3%	577	22%
Summer II 1994	58	2%	564	21%
Fall 1994	326	12%	553	21%
Spring 1995	269	10%	468	18%
Summer I 1995	61	2%	386	15%
Summer II 1995	46	2%	372	14%
Fall 1995	229	9%	357	14%
Spring 1996	194	7%	279	11%
Summer I 1996	47	2%	191	7%
Summer II 1996	37	1%	181	7%
Fall 1996	169	6%	169	6%

A total of 2,643 students entered PGCC as first-time college students in fall 1990. Sixty-one percent (1,614 students) returned in spring 1991, although an additional 12 percent or 327 students would enroll at PGCC in a later semester during the six-year period ending with the fall 1996 term. This adjusted persistence rate, which accounts for interrupted or "stop-out" attendance patterns, suggests that one-fourth of the new students entering the college each fall fail to return for a second semester at PGCC.

Forty-four percent of the fall 1990 entrants attended PGCC the following fall. Fifty-nine percent attended in fall 1991 and/or a later term. Put another way, two in five students failed to persist past the first year. Enrollment and persistence of fall 1990 first-time students at the second through seventh fall semesters are shown below:

Fall 1990 Cohort Retention, Fall Terms
Percent Enrolled and Persisting each Fall
(Persistence as of Fall 1996 Semester)
N = 2,643

Term	Enrolled	Persisting
Second fall (1991)	44%	59%
Third fall (1992)	28%	43%
Fourth fall (1993)	17%	30%
Fifth fall (1994)	12%	21%
Sixth fall (1995)	9%	14%
Seventh fall (1996)	6%	6%

Term Attendance

Have retention rates changed in the recent past? Answering this question requires retention data for multiple cohorts. The research office is currently tracking the enrollment and progress of four fall cohorts (first-time students entering PGCC in fall 1990, 1991, 1992, and 1993). The attendance of students in each cohort in each term (retention according to the first definition) is presented in a table on page 4. Persistence according to the second definition (enrolled in a given or subsequent term, accounting for interruptions in attendance) is analyzed in a separate section following this one.

Percent of Cohort Attending Each Term				
Term	1990 Cohort	1991 Cohort	1992 Cohort	1993 Cohort
1	100	100	100	100
2	61	60	58	60
3	10	9	8	8
4	6	6	5	5
5	44	45	43	43
6	37	37	35	36
7	7	7	6	6
8	4	5	4	4
9	28	27	28	29
10	23	21	22	23
11	5	4	4	4
12	3	3	3	3
13	17	16	18	18

Term 1 is the fall the cohort entered the college. Term 2 is the spring semester following the entry fall term (e.g., for the 1992 cohort, term 2 is spring 1993). Terms 3 and 4 are the following summer sessions. Term 5 is the second fall term (e.g., for the 1992 cohort, term 5 is fall 1993). In the above table, terms 1, 5, 9, and 13 are fall terms.

This examination of enrollment in individual terms suggests that retention rates have remained stable since 1990. For example, the percentages of fall entrants continuing the following spring for the four cohorts were 61, 60, 58, and 60 percent, respectively. Retention rates to the second fall term were 44, 45, 43, and 43 percent. The percentages retained to the third fall were 28, 27, 28, and 29, respectively. Retention rates to the fourth fall were 17, 16, 18, and 18 percent.

The number of students in each first-time student cohort attending each term--the data underlying the above percentages--are presented in the table on the following page.

Number of Students Attending Each Term				
Term	1990 Cohort	1991 Cohort	1992 Cohort	1993 Cohort
1	2,643	2,521	2,563	2,419
2	1,614	1,505	1,498	1,450
3	267	224	211	183
4	160	151	137	120
5	1,175	1,145	1,099	1,045
6	968	922	899	869
7	187	174	165	150
8	115	128	107	103
9	727	687	728	695
10	595	528	567	557
11	125	106	112	92
12	92	70	81	64
13	462	410	473	437

Persistence Rates

The persistence rate patterns, accounting for interruptions in attendance, showed stability similar to that of the term attendance retention rates. The percentages of first-time students persisting past their intial fall enrollment (i.e., attending the following spring and/or a subsequent term) for the 1990 through 1993 cohorts were 71, 70, 70, and 70 percent. (For purposes of these comparative rates, persistence rates were calculated based on enrollments through term 13 for all four cohorts.) Persistence rates as of the second fall term were 55, 55, 54, and 54 percent, respectively. As of the third fall term, persistence rates were 35, 34, 36, and 36 percent. The percentages of students enrolled in the fourth fall term were 17, 16, 18, and 18 percent.

Persistence rates for all four cohorts for each term through the fourth fall (term 13) are presented in the table on the following page.

Percent of Cohort Attending Specified or Subsequent Term				
Term	1990 Cohort	1991 Cohort	1992 Cohort	1993 Cohort
1	100	100	100	100
2	71	70	70	70
3	57	56	55	56
4	56	56	55	55
5	55	55	54	54
6	47	46	45	46
7	37	36	37	38
8	36	35	36	37
9	35	34	36	36
10	29	27	29	29
11	20	19	20	20
12	19	17	19	19
13	17	16	18	18

The number of students in each cohort from which the above rates were calculated are presented in the table at the top of page 7.

Discussion

The Campus Retention Committee identified three measures for monitoring student persistence and progress:

Course pass rates. The percentage of initial course enrollees earning a passing grade; calculated for every course each fall term.

Term-to-term retention and persistence. As defined above.

Degree progress and completion. The percentage of degree-seeking students graduating, transferring, or achieving sophomore status in good standing three, four, five, and six years after entering the college.

Number of Students Attending Specified or Subsequent Term				
Term	1990 Cohort	1991 Cohort	1992 Cohort	1993 Cohort
1	2,643	2,519	2,563	2,419
2	1,884	1,774	1,790	1,696
3	1,500	1,422	1,421	1,346
4	1,478	1,401	1,398	1,328
5	1,464	1,393	1,384	1,317
6	1,245	1,163	1,166	1,122
7	975	913	953	918
8	951	885	935	897
9	937	857	920	877
10	767	676	733	703
11	522	469	524	474
12	498	434	499	454
13	462	410	473	437

This review of term-to-term retention and persistence rates suggests the following:

- One in four first-time college students entering PGCC each fall fails to return for further study at the college.
- Less than half of the students starting college in the fall attend PGCC the following fall.
- Less than a third of new fall students persist beyond three years.
- Retention and persistence rates of first-time fall entering students have remained stable during the 1990s.

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